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ABSTRACT

This digest explores the community college's mission to increase student attendance and performance by improving faculty diversity. Community colleges are filled with multicultural, diverse students who bring different knowledge and skills to educational institutions. These students are also attracted to the community college for different reasons. The faculty/student relationship is seen as the core to the learning experience. Students have to be able to identify with the faculty, and faculty members have to be able to identify with the students. A diverse student body needs instruction and leadership from a diverse faculty and administration. Case studies include five community colleges from different regions of the country that are increasing diversity through: (1) focused recruitment of underrepresented groups; (2) internships for individuals from diverse backgrounds, which help impart knowledge on overall community college instruction and operation; (3) fellowships; (4) transfer agreements with historically black colleges; (5) diverse faculty/staff mentor programs, which provide information to future administrators and faculty; and (6) professional development (national organization workshops/conferences). The digest concludes that the global expansion of education makes diversity necessary to community college survival and achievement. (Contains 11 references.) (MKF)

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Digest

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Multicultural Strategies for Community Colleges: Expanding Faculty Diversity

By Laura Kirkpatrick

For years, many community colleges have been discussing the need for multiculturalism in the classroom in an effort to give students an understanding of an increasingly diverse population. According to Burstein (1997), multicultural education is a process that promotes understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity that exists within a pluralist society. King (2000) stresses that students must be able to compete academically and technologically on a global scale and to communicate effectively with people from different cultures.

Multiculturalism is of great importance in the community college, for it is the community college that provides the initial exposure to higher education for most non-traditional students. Adopting a multicultural stance in the community college is helpful in facing the challenge of serving a diverse student clientele (Burstein, 1997). However, undertaking such an endeavor is not an easy task. Students that come from a variety of cultural and lifestyle backgrounds need role models on their college campuses (Erkut & Mokros, 1984). Increasing the diversity of the administration and faculty is one promising way to provide role models and establish the kind of rapport needed for effective mentoring. To be effective, mentoring must include people that listen to each other, care about each other, and have a willingness to strive toward mutually rewarding experiences leading to the satisfaction of individual and group needs (ACE/AAUP, 2000).

Multicultural Success through a Multicultural Faculty

Multicultural education involves more than adding a few classes. Rhoads and Solorzano (1995) contend that this endeavor should begin with restructuring community colleges so that all constituents have the opportunity to expand upon current academic understandings, making issues of citizenship, social responsibility, and democratic participation central to the experience. The personal and academic relationship between faculty and students has been referred to as the "core relationship" of learning, encompassing the roles of teachers and students, the subject matter and their interaction in the classroom (Burnette, 2000). Castro-Abad (1995) stresses that a faculty member's goal should be to assist multicultural students in adapting to American educational culture rather than to bring about, or encourage, their assimilation. Such a curriculum could enable all students, regardless of their cultural background, to take an active role in their own education.

Though student diversity on community college campuses is increasing at a rapid pace, community colleges are not achieving similar levels of diversity among their administrators (Foote, 1996). Some experts believe that community colleges will not reach their full potential as a catalyst for educational and social progress without increasing the commitment to multicultural leadership (Bowen & Muller, 1996). Students from underrepresented cultural and lifestyle backgrounds are less attracted to education and teaching as a profession due to the lack of desirable role models in those particular fields (Crase, 1994). Thus, the lack of diverse role models in faculty and administrative positions creates a cyclical pattern in which the diminished diversity works against the ability and desire to increase and build a multicultural environment.

Beyond Good Intentions to Implementation

Recognizing the need to hire a more multicultural staff, a number of innovative educators have initiated programs to help recruit and train staff from underrepresented populations to succeed academically and socially within the community college system. Several of these ongoing initiatives are described below.

Schenectady County Community College (NY)

Schenectady County Community College, New York campus, created an intern program aimed to increase faculty diversity. The program was started after the college's affirmative action and multi-cultural affairs committee decided to address the lack of diversity among faculty. The program is designed to select and give interns from a variety of diverse cultures an overall knowledge of the entire community college operations. Candidates intern for four semesters and then apply for vacancies as they become available.

San Diego & Imperial Counties (CA)

The San Diego and Imperial Counties Community College Association in cooperation with San Diego State University created a community college training internship for members of multicultural groups interested in community college teaching or counseling careers. The program identifies, recruits, trains, prepares, and helps place individuals from historically underrepresented groups in California community colleges as faculty and counselors. Throughout the year, each intern works very

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closely with an assigned mentor. After completion of the program, interns are employed by one of the colleges as an adjunct instructor or counselor. During a three-year period, 70 interns participated in the program; 70% were females and 80% were from multicultural backgrounds, including International, African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Amer-Asian students. The program has been successful; 75% of interns have been employed at a community college after program completion.

Borough of Manhattan Community College (NY)

Recognizing that its student body is far more diverse than its faculty, the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York has developed a fellowship program aimed at recruiting teaching fellows from diverse populations that represented the variety of ethnic groups within the community. The minority fellowship program was started in the fall of 2000 and is designed to recruit teaching fellows from among multicultural graduates. These graduates are placed into the program where they teach 12 hours per week under a mentor teacher, and, upon completion of the program, they are given the opportunity to compete for an available faculty position at the community college.

City College of San Francisco (CA)

The City College of San Francisco (CCSF) has listed diversity as a key institutional value in its strategic plan and stresses the importance of celebrating the diversity of the students, faculty, administrators, and communities it serves. To achieve this goal, CCSF has established a Faculty/Mentor Diversity Internship to increase the number of faculty members from a variety of cultural and lifestyle groups employed by the college. The interns are afforded the opportunity to learn and practice teaching and interaction techniques appropriate for community college students, which will make them more competitive when applying for full and part-time positions after all project qualifications have been met. CCSF also supports diversity by sponsoring the Annual World PULSE Diversity Retreat, a weekend of exploring cultural issues and identities.

Santa Monica College (CA)

Santa Monica College (SMC) produces more transfer students from a variety of minority groups for the University of California system and the California State System than any other community college in the state. Under the leadership of its president, SMC has developed several programs that address diversity issues. At SMC, the areas of greatest impact are mentoring and "grow your own" activities. The college provides professional development, utilizing national organizations that promote underrepresented groups in higher education. The college president and other key administrators and faculty also serve as active mentors to these students. In addition, SMC has engaged in a new transfer agreement with historically black colleges, encouraging former African-American students to come back to SMC as professional employees.

Conclusion

It is beneficial for community colleges to adopt programming activities that encourage faculty, administrators, and students to enhance their growth and development through interactions with people from a variety of lifestyles and cultures. Moreno (2000) stresses that for the benefit of educational efficiency and productivity, multicultural groups accomplish tasks that could not be done by individuals working alone; they bring multiple skills and talents to bear on highly complex tasks. The community college student population, which is increasingly diverse, needs administrators and faculty members as mentors and role models who can demonstrate successful strategies to overcome barriers and achieve success. "A basic tenet of psychological theories of identification is that people emulate models who are perceived to be similar to themselves in terms of personality, characteristics, background, race, and sex" (Erkut & Mokros, 1984, p. 400). The relationship between educators and students is most effective hen both groups share common experiences and characteristics.

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